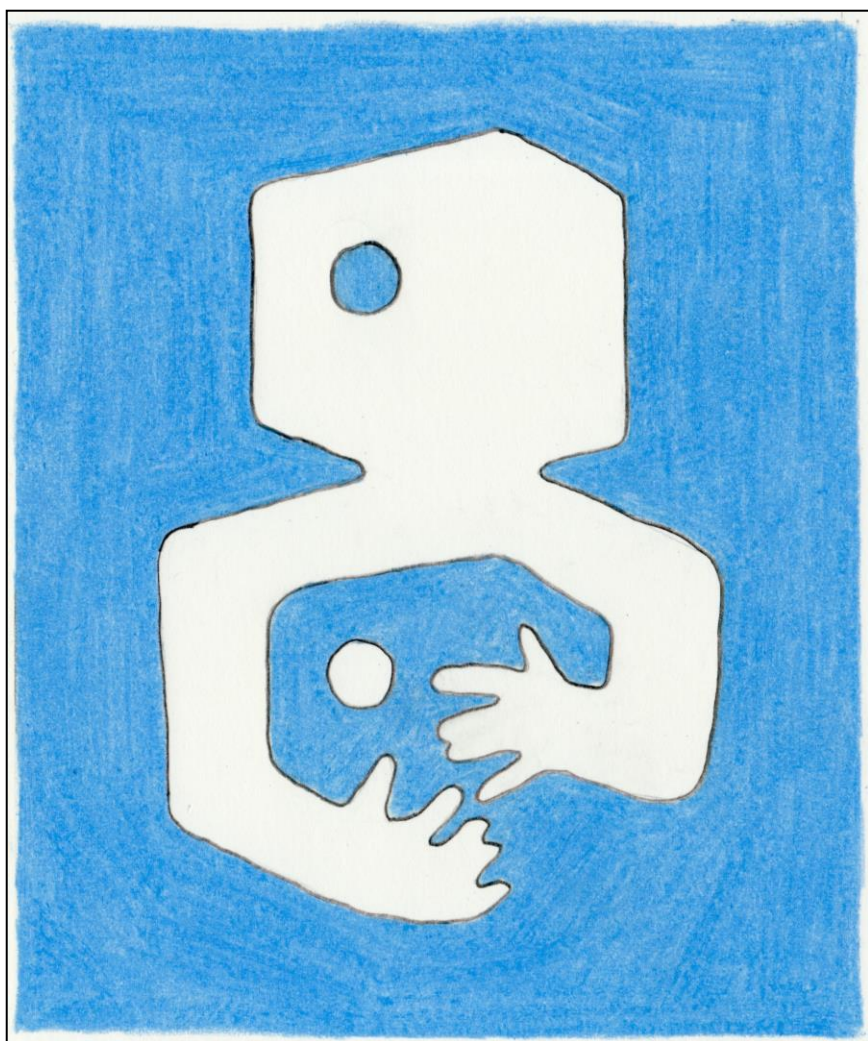


Selected Poems

2004-2007



Linus Gog ©2008

Jason Sturner

Contents

1	Eidolon
2	Whispers
3	In Spite of Candlelight
4	Can You Dig It, Girl?
5	Comfort Zone
6	Pulse
7	Arachnophobia Cured!
7	Moonshadow
8	Promise of an Eagle, to a Friend
9	The Pace of Waiting
10	Last Words
11	Broken Hearts in Paris
12	The Props at My Funeral
13	Emma's Favorite Thing to Look At
15	My Morning Sickness
16	14 April 2005
17	Stopwatch
18	These Things
19	Could You Stay the Night, Forever?
20	Psalm of My Own
21	Morning Rain
22	Seasonally Home

Eidolon

I want to wake you
with a kiss

Bring you to the patio
where breakfast waits

Feed you strawberries,
blueberries, compliments.

I want to take you
by the hand

Walk you to the beach
where waves wait

Give you an ocean,
the sun, my heart.

I would love you—
I would love you so easily
if you were real.

Whispers

I am a whisper.
Of storms through your skin,
the desire-rain
across your inner thigh.

You are a whisper.
Of buttons slightly untamed,
the lightning-window
inside a metal frame.

This pinprick in our shadow
reveals a minor flow,
like hearts caught in a spiral
where the wind ascends.

And if dust settled
on the swan's bones,
a quilt-sky could rise
from this field of poppies.

Until then, I am a whisper.
Of night tangled in vines,
the dream-pathos
exhausting your sleep.

Until then, you are a whisper.
Of thoughts shutting my eyes,
the curtain-stage
hiding these theatricals.

In Spite of Candlelight

She senses
Something past me
A bit like hope
Cast off my shoulder
To the wall

X, I want to
O, she can

I see
Something airborne
A bit like revelation
The tarnished halo
Of her visit

X, tonight!
But O, she cannot

She feels
Something for herself
A bit like regret
Slipping off the heavy end of a sigh
When she goes

Can You Dig It, Girl?

I washed you out
with a few cold beers,
your pretty face
among old parts in the garage.
You had me under your sheets
before I realized my mistake—
Hooks, lures;
gasping hearts flopping
all over the place.

They say behind every man
is a good woman.
My-my,
how things have changed.

Comfort Zone

When rainbows evaporate
and flowers burst into dust

When the rivers
become bloodstreams
I'll bloom
and sing like a bird

I'll scoop you up
and into my arms
Bone by bone, hair by hair
Your fair skull
against my heaving chest

We'll talk
of philosophy and science
of gods and devils
with love at the center
as a fire

And when it burns down
And when it burns down
I will bury you again

my only love.

Pulse

The morning is cool, quiet,
set perfectly in place
and her eyes are filled with it.

She kneels down,
watches bees
bend the silky petals
of her favorite flower.

Time is a deific ox
pulling her life forward, steadily
and her eyes are splintered by it.

She stands up,
hears a starling
stream music from its breast;
today it will find a mate.

With two fingers across her wrist
and a mild concern in her heart, she thinks

Where does the beauty of a flower go when it dies?

Arachnophobia Cured!

*Regarding those non-native lady beetles
that invade our homes in the Fall.*

Late last night
the ladybugs came to get me
to swarm over me
in the dark.

And this morning
I'd have woken up eaten
if it weren't
for the spiders.

Moonshadow

She sails under a moonshadow
on the back of a white swan.
Tears fall down her cheeks
because her heart is unloved.

She sees twilight in the water
then turns around to face it.
A star shooting overhead
sparkles romance from its tail.

She thinks, *Why can't that be for me?*

But each tear that fell on the lake
became a ripple towards shore.
And love waits patiently
just beyond the water lilies.

Promise of an Eagle, to a Friend

for Rita Hartje

— *Sin & Confession*

You've asked me to speak of eagles.
Of diurnal flight over moonlit valleys.
I was to offer you the brazen talon
of its faith, hope, and love. As a song.

But I lied when I said I could spring
this bird from my heart willingly.
I betrayed myself into thinking
I was the keeper of its valor. I am not.

In truth, it flies through me but doesn't see me.
A ghost of old tears reflects from its eyes.
And though my soul is wretched and my ego has lied,
I long for your unconditional love. In dreams...

So many nights I've fallen asleep in your heart!
Awoken in the world your words have built.
I can't kiss your angelic face, but I hear its soft music.
It sings that our distance is illusion. It's not real.

— *Redemption*

You've asked me to speak of eagles.
Of nocturnal flight over sunlit peaks.
To take your hand, guide you across clouds,
and illustrate the strength of God. I have. In you.

With faith, hope, and love under wing,
you have flown softly, quietly through me.
The embers of your saintly energy
raining down upon my soul. I weep.

Because *you*, my friend, are the eagle.
You see me.

The Pace of Waiting

The sunflowers grow tall
in fields we don't know,
leaning over the broken bodies

of men younger than the day
of men wiser
than night.

Soldiers inhaling
the light of sunset;
a reveille to the angels.

These men chivalrous,
sanguine; anxious to make proud
their transfigured fathers.

Unaware, it would seem,
of the world's way of forgetting
and not forgiving.

These men . . . a man, dreaming
in black and blue. Wondering if the
blood, the pain, is a gift for his god.

Hoping invisible hands
will gather all his relevant pieces
and let his hour be peaceful.

That those he loves most
will conquer this distance
sit alongside him,
and carry him home.

Last Words

I hear you in a dream calling out.
Searching for that someone
you have never known. I sit alone
in a rotating corner—shadows forming
all your favorite shapes.

My dream-self does not know
where it belongs in such dreams.
Always wishing it could tell you
that I am findable. That in your equation
I can be proven.

You've seen my silhouette, coming off the walls
you walk along. It hinders the burning sun for you;
is a barrier when it's cold.
But have you looked closely, lately?
Look now.

And though not in the shape of a crown
or a single, confident rose,
it is not a dangerous thing.
It is not meaningless.
Did you even know, you're its maker?

These are the things I want to tell you.
But my dream-tongue must hold.
It holds because I know that in the place
where we actually speak
we are speaking our last words.

Broken Hearts in Paris

I dreamt last night
Of the last night I saw you,
All covered in deadweight gold
And tarnished by its light.

You stood at the window,
An angel with burnt wings
And a soul tired of dancing.
"It's never easy backing out," you said.

"I know," I replied,
Our backs facing each other
And the voice not quite my own.
"Sometimes it isn't what we imagine."

You breathed against the window
And made a heart with your fingertip.
I closed my eyes
And put my forehead to the door.

When moonlight fell across the bed
You turned to me and said, "Paris, we
Should've gone to Paris. They have stars
And paintings, all the romance you can take."

I fumbled for my keys and opened the door.

"And broken hearts," I said.
Plenty of broken hearts.

The Props at My Funeral

While I sleep
toss a rope down my throat.
Climb in—
But beware of the biting words
that linger along the throat.
They are bitter, always questioning
destiny's decisions.
When you reach a path lit by embers
grab your cross, and hold it tight.
There, bits of heart decompose along the turn.
You should cover your head, for it drips still
off the ribs
(Remnants
 of a splat-
 ter-ed
 love
affair).
You may even see her against the starless dark.
A ghostly angel playing the loose string
of a smashed violin . . .
(It is true: sometimes the old sounds are deafening
and you can't hear the new ones)
But I digress.
Follow the map that I gave you
and gather the props as you go:
The rusty crown.
The bloody pile of nightingale feathers.
The broken teeth of one genuine smile.
And don't forget the dried up pen and quill.
I should remind you now
to leave by morning,
for tomorrow I will sit at the edge of the world.
There I will smile into the rising sun
and without a thought

drop off.

Emma's Favorite Thing to Look At

The sun rose ripe and warm over the quiet town of Batavia, Illinois, tucking shadows into the pockets of morning. People opened their shutters and children ran out to play. Robins sang high in the trees as squirrels played beneath them.

With a proud smile on his face, a father gently puts his daughter Emma into a bright red stroller. Seconds later and they're off, destined for the local park – the one with all the old trees and a creek lined with violets. As they follow the sidewalk a breeze comes along and tickles Emma's face, lifting her curls. She giggles like life is at its brilliant best.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the park, a newly emerged swallowtail spreads its wings in the warm sun, nearly ready for its first flight.

Emma and her father enter the park. An immense, magical world of flora and fauna surrounds them in all directions. Emma's eyes light up, dash from right to left, up then down – there is so much to see!

Then something red flies by and lands in a shrub. "Look Em," her father says, pointing, "there's a cardinal."

The stroller comes to a halt and Emma's father disappears. He reappears a few seconds later with a purple flower and offers it to Emma. She takes the drooping flower in her tiny hands and stares at it. After a moment she looks up at her father, who raises his arms. "Emma, what could *that* be?"

Emma seems puzzled. "That's a violet, Em," he says. Suddenly she turns away and drops the flower onto her lap, watching something small, yellow, and airborne coming towards them. Her eyes go wide. It's like nothing she has ever seen.

With a jolt of excitement Emma positions herself at the edge of the stroller and looks at her father, who remains silent. The butterfly comes closer, most certainly noticing Emma and her big brown eyes. But it also sees something else – the bright red, perhaps nectar-filled object Emma is sitting in.

Fighting the breeze, the swallowtail makes its way to the stroller, orbiting both Emma and her father. It flits up and over their heads, spirals down and back up again, casts a tiny shadow across them.

"Emma," her father whispers, "that's a but-ter-fly."

Emma watches the frantic display, then looks to be sure her dad is watching too. By the time she turns back the golden insect has landed on the stroller's edge, seemingly to relax its wings; tired from its first flight.

Emma sits very still, never taking her eyes off the curious visitor. But that cannot last. Bubbles start to shoot off her lips like fireworks, and in seconds she's lost all control – slapping tiny hands on pink legs and making all sorts of incomprehensible but joyful sounds. In that same moment, not for fear, but of necessity to carry on with its butterfly ways, the newborn swallowtail ascends from the stroller and flies away.

And although the butterfly would never return, it was never far from Emma's heart.

Author's note: This piece was inspired by an obituary. For reasons unstated, a little girl named Emma passed away when she was two years old. The obituary was quite short, but it contained such simplicity and innocence that I will never forget it. It was told that one of her favorite things to look at were the butterflies.

My Morning Sickness

my morning sickness
is a morning dream
of reaching for the girl
that keeps falling
off my edge

reoccurring memories
dive-bomb the present
blooming up the gut
to break open
old scars in the heart

the dream fades
when day hits its fist
pulling fresh thin skin
over broken bone

I walk the park
in mindful stride
a stress-heavy head
chiseled clean by calm

I turn the corner
and sink into a stop
there, a man sits in the grass
holding his baby in laughter

and now, my morning sickness
concerns an unknown child—
a child that would look so much
like her and me

14 April 2005

In response to a dream in the book Einstein's Dreams

It is nights like this
when the halls of my heart
are filled with moonlit sonatas
and a numbing ache

that all I want
is to be next to you
watch you sleep
and be the first thing you see
when morning comes.

To remind you
that even if life repeats itself
we always find each other,
beautifully, over and over again.

But tonight, all I have
is a beer in my hand
these words in my head
and no way of knowing
how to love you.

Stopwatch

Everyone is dead.
Slumped against steering wheels,
on the floors of kitchens and bedrooms,
face down in swimming pools.

Bodies litter the malls,
the halls of prestigious universities,
they're in hospitals and sports bars,
at desks in corporate offices.

In the center of the Oval Office
lies the body of our president,
maggots crawl out
from beneath her eyelids.

The rats beneath the streets
lift their heads and twitch their noses.
Vultures fly off trees
into waves of decay.

Remnants of humanity crumble,
are buried, eroded and grown over.
We are dust and fossils; we are history.
The planet is lush and productive.

Out in an unnamed ocean
a new breed of dolphin is born,
its flippers more like modified claws.
One day, it will use them to grasp the shoreline.

These Things

for Kelly K. Moran

I have longed to be
the quiet, fading light
that helps you sleep;
and sunrise through the open door.

I've stayed awake for hours,
wondering how I could channel
the most beautiful things
through your eyes,
and into your heart.

I have wished to be
the warm, child-long summer
that stirs your playful curiosity;
and dreams across the long winter.

For a time I doubted
I could be any of these things,
or the myriad others
that fill my head each day.

But the stronger my life
bonds with yours,
the less I doubt my abilities,
the more revealed is my part.

With love, all possibility follows;
it follows me, it follows you.
And all these things wished for
are already true.

Could You Stay the Night, Forever?

Wrapped in the fireplace
of your arms. Warmed by
the trust in your smile.
The night and our love

Are acquainted. You cuddle close
and feel my heart. I brush your
hair away from your face.
The window and the rain

Are old friends. Soft candle-
light washes over our skin,
soft music over our repose.
The ambiance and timing

Couldn't be better. I look
down at you, you're falling asleep.
I kiss your forehead
and whisper, *Sleep well.*

With eyes closed, you sigh
and reply, *Then don't go.*

Psalm of My Own

God makes no promise
but that of love.

He says,
Reside in the V of my arms
like a bird's nest
in branches.

Firmly, I will hold you;
strong storms and wind through.

Love makes no promise
but that of itself.

She says,
Trust your heart and let me shine
like a wave of light
through dark forests:

Make peace with yourself
and make peace with others,
for you'll need acceptance in your eyes
when you meet us.

Morning Rain

for Kelly K. Moran

This morning there was much rain,
forcing the birds into trees,
the butterflies beneath leaves.

I stand at the open window,
listening for the cool silence
between raindrops.

I begin to wonder
about time machines,
about being fully absorbed into the future:

The full view of a sunset
from our porch chairs,
a cat resting at our feet.
Faces aged, a hand
holding a hand.

And the wind
comes down from flowered hills,
filling the home with fragrances.
Everything is golden orange
like a softly glowing jewel.

I blink and turn from the window.
Another routine day begins.
The echoes of my heartbeat
will mingle with the rain.

Seasonally Home

I pack away summer clothes
to a soundscape of Vivaldi.
The songs of summer birds
have settled like dust.

I stand at the window,
watch leaves fall across the yard,
overcome by a sensation
I cannot deny:

My heart is in a dance
with autumn's return.

Road

You can say the sun is shining if you really want to
I can see the moon and it seems so clear
You can take the road that takes you to the stars now
I can take a road that'll see me through
I can take a road that'll see me through.

You can take a road that takes you to the stars now
I can take a road that'll see me through
I can take a road that'll see me through
I can take a road that'll see me through.

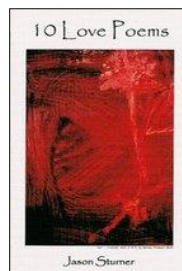
—Nick Drake (1948-1974)



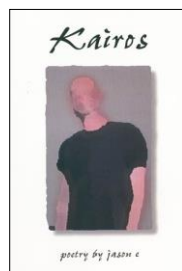
Jason Sturner was born in Harvey, Illinois, and raised in the western suburbs of Chicago. He is a member of the Illinois State Poetry Society and has published three books of poetry: *Kairos*, *10 Love Poems*, and *Selected Poems 2004-2007*. In addition to poetry he writes flash fiction, short stories, and nature essays. He resides in Geneva, Illinois, and works as a botanist at the Morton Arboretum in Lisle. Website: www.jasonsturner.blogspot.com

Also available:

10 Love Poems is a collection of Sturner's most romantic poetry. It's available at Anderson's Bookshop in Naperville, Town House Books in St. Charles, and the public libraries of Batavia and St. Charles (call # 811.6 STU). Copies are also available for \$5 through the author's website or by emailing him at flowerpetalsonthecreek@yahoo.com. Free digital copies can be found at Google Books and other e-book sites (see website for details).



Kairos is Sturner's first book of poetry. It's available at Town House Books in St. Charles, Amazon.com, and the public libraries of Batavia, Geneva, North Aurora and St. Charles (call # 811.6 SCH or 811.6 STU). Free digital copies can be found at Google Books and other e-book sites (see website for details).



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